

Federal Acquisition Regulation

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AUTHORITY: 40 U.S.C. 121(c); 10 U.S.C. chapter 137; and 51 U.S.C. 20113.

33.000 Scope of part.

This part prescribes policies and procedures for filing protests and for processing contract disputes and appeals.

[50 FR 2270, Jan. 15, 1985]

33.001 General.

There are other Federal court-related protest authorities and dispute-appeal authorities that are not covered by this part of the FAR, e.g., 28 U.S.C. 1491 for Court of Federal Claims jurisdiction. Contracting officers should contact their designated legal advisor for additional information whenever they become aware of any litigation related to their contracts.

[77 FR 56743, Sept. 13, 2012]

Subpart 33.1—Protests

33.101 Definitions.

As used in this subpart—

Day means a calendar day, unless otherwise specified. In the computation of any period—

- (1) The day of the act, event, or default from which the designated period of time begins to run is not included; and
- (2) The last day after the act, event, or default is included unless—

(i) The last day is a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday; or

(ii) In the case of a filing of a paper at any appropriate administrative forum, the last day is a day on which weather or other conditions cause the closing of the forum for all or part of the day, in which event the next day on which the appropriate administrative forum is open is included.

Filed means the complete receipt of any document by an agency before its close of business. Documents received after close of business are considered filed as of the next day. Unless otherwise stated, the agency close of business is presumed to be 4:30 p.m., local time.

Interested Party for the purpose of filing a protest means an actual or prospective offeror whose direct economic interest would be affected by the award of a contract or by the failure to award a contract.

Protest means a written objection by an interested party to any of the following:

(1) A solicitation or other request by an agency for offers for a contract for the procurement of property or services.

(2) The cancellation of the solicitation or other request.

(3) An award or proposed award of the contract.

(4) A termination or cancellation of an award of the contract, if the written objection contains an allegation that the termination or cancellation is based in whole or in part on improprieties concerning the award of the contract.

Protest venue means protests filed with the agency, the Government Accountability Office, or the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. U.S. District Courts do not have any bid protest jurisdiction.

[50 FR 2270, Jan. 15, 1985, as amended at 53 FR 43391, Oct. 26, 1988; 54 FR 19827, May 8, 1989; 60 FR 48225, Sept. 18, 1995; 62 FR 64933, Dec. 9, 1997; 66 FR 2132, Jan. 10, 2001; 77 FR 56743, Sept. 13, 2012]

33.102 General.

(a) Without regard to the protest venue, contracting officers shall consider all protests and seek legal advice, whether protests are submitted before

or after award and whether filed directly with the agency, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), or the U.S. Court of Federal Claims. (See 19.302 for protests of small business status, 19.305 for protests of disadvantaged business status, 19.306 for protests of HUBZone small business status, and 19.307 for protests of service-disabled veteran-owned small business status, and 19.308 for protests of the status of an economically disadvantaged women-owned small business concern or of a women-owned small business concern eligible under the Women-Owned Small Business Program.)

(b) If, in connection with a protest, the head of an agency determines that a solicitation, proposed award, or award does not comply with the requirements of law or regulation, the head of the agency may—

(1) Take any action that could have been recommended by the Comptroller General had the protest been filed with the Government Accountability Office;

(2) Pay appropriate costs as stated in 33.104(h);

(3) Require the awardee to reimburse the Government's costs, as provided in this paragraph, where a postaward protest is sustained as the result of an awardee's intentional or negligent misstatement, misrepresentation, or miscertification. In addition to any other remedy available, and pursuant to the requirements of Subpart 32.6, the Government may collect this debt by offsetting the amount against any payment due the awardee under any contract between the awardee and the Government.

(i) When a protest is sustained by GAO under circumstances that may allow the Government to seek reimbursement for protest costs, the contracting officer will determine whether the protest was sustained based on the awardee's negligent or intentional misrepresentation. If the protest was sustained on several issues, protest costs shall be apportioned according to the costs attributable to the awardee's actions.

(ii) The contracting officer shall review the amount of the debt, degree of the awardee's fault, and costs of collection, to determine whether a demand for reimbursement ought to be made. If

it is in the best interests of the Government to seek reimbursement, the contracting officer shall notify the contractor in writing of the nature and amount of the debt, and the intention to collect by offset if necessary. Prior to issuing a final decision, the contracting officer shall afford the contractor an opportunity to inspect and copy agency records pertaining to the debt to the extent permitted by statute and regulation, and to request review of the matter by the head of the contracting activity.

(iii) When appropriate, the contracting officer shall also refer the matter to the agency debarment official for consideration under Subpart 9.4.

(c) In accordance with 31 U.S.C. 1558, with respect to any protest filed with the GAO, if the funds available to the agency for a contract at the time a protest is filed in connection with a solicitation for, proposed award of, or award of such a contract would otherwise expire, such funds shall remain available for obligation for 100 days after the date on which the final ruling is made on the protest. A ruling is considered final on the date on which the time allowed for filing an appeal or request for reconsideration has expired, or the date on which a decision is rendered on such appeal or request, whichever is later.

(d) *Protest likely after award.* The contracting officer may stay performance of a contract within the time period contained in 33.104(c)(1) if the contracting officer makes a written determination that—

(1) A protest is likely to be filed; and

(2) Delay of performance is, under the circumstances, in the best interests of the United States.

(e) An interested party wishing to protest is encouraged to seek resolution within the agency (see 33.103) before filing a protest with the GAO, but may protest to the GAO in accordance with GAO regulations (4 CFR part 21).

(f) No person may file a protest at GAO for a procurement integrity violation unless that person reported to the contracting officer the information constituting evidence of the violation within 14 days after the person first

discovered the possible violation (41 U.S.C. 2106).

[50 FR 2270, Jan. 15, 1985, as amended at 55 FR 38517, Sept. 18, 1990; 55 FR 52795, Dec. 21, 1990; 60 FR 48226, 48275, Sept. 18, 1995; 61 FR 41470, Aug. 8, 1996; 61 FR 67411, Dec. 20, 1996; 62 FR 233, Jan. 2, 1997; 63 FR 35724, June 30, 1998; 69 FR 25279, May 5, 2004; 71 FR 36941, June 28, 2006; 71 FR 57380, Sept. 28, 2006; 75 FR 77731, Dec. 13, 2010; 76 FR 18312, Apr. 1, 2011; 77 FR 56743, Sept. 13, 2012; 79 FR 24212, Apr. 29, 2014]

33.103 Protests to the agency.

(a) *Reference.* Executive Order 12979, Agency Procurement Protests, establishes policy on agency procurement protests.

(b) Prior to submission of an agency protest, all parties shall use their best efforts to resolve concerns raised by an interested party at the contracting officer level through open and frank discussions.

(c) The agency should provide for inexpensive, informal, procedurally simple, and expeditious resolution of protests. Where appropriate, the use of alternative dispute resolution techniques, third party neutrals, and another agency's personnel are acceptable protest resolution methods.

(d) The following procedures are established to resolve agency protests effectively, to build confidence in the Government's acquisition system, and to reduce protests outside of the agency:

(1) Protests shall be concise and logically presented to facilitate review by the agency. Failure to substantially comply with any of the requirements of paragraph (d)(2) of this section may be grounds for dismissal of the protest.

(2) Protests shall include the following information:

(i) Name, address, and fax and telephone numbers of the protester.

(ii) Solicitation or contract number.

(iii) Detailed statement of the legal and factual grounds for the protest, to include a description of resulting prejudice to the protester.

(iv) Copies of relevant documents.

(v) Request for a ruling by the agency.

(vi) Statement as to the form of relief requested.

(vii) All information establishing that the protester is an interested

party for the purpose of filing a protest.

(viii) All information establishing the timeliness of the protest.

(3) All protests filed directly with the agency will be addressed to the contracting officer or other official designated to receive protests.

(4) In accordance with agency procedures, interested parties may request an independent review of their protest at a level above the contracting officer; solicitations should advise potential bidders and offerors that this review is available. Agency procedures and/or solicitations shall notify potential bidders and offerors whether this independent review is available as an alternative to consideration by the contracting officer of a protest or is available as an appeal of a contracting officer decision on a protest. Agencies shall designate the official(s) who are to conduct this independent review, but the official(s) need not be within the contracting officer's supervisory chain. When practicable, officials designated to conduct the independent review should not have had previous personal involvement in the procurement. If there is an agency appellate review of the contracting officer's decision on the protest, it will not extend GAO's timeliness requirements. Therefore, any subsequent protest to the GAO must be filed within 10 days of knowledge of initial adverse agency action (4 CFR 21.2(a)(3)).

(e) Protests based on alleged apparent improprieties in a solicitation shall be filed before bid opening or the closing date for receipt of proposals. In all other cases, protests shall be filed no later than 10 days after the basis of protest is known or should have been known, whichever is earlier. The agency, for good cause shown, or where it determines that a protest raises issues significant to the agency's acquisition system, may consider the merits of any protest which is not timely filed.

(f) *Action upon receipt of protest.* (1) Upon receipt of a protest before award, a contract may not be awarded, pending agency resolution of the protest, unless contract award is justified, in writing, for urgent and compelling reasons or is determined, in writing, to be in the best interest of the Government.